

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 MCT-01 DHA-02 SCA-01
SCS-03 OPR-02 PC-01 CU-02 AID-05 /067 W
-----281722 075365 /50

O R 281625Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3491
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 0907

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINS, ES
SUBJECT: GOES MOVES TO CLEAR PLAZA OF OPPOSITION PROTEST

REFS: (A) SAN SALVADOR 0900, (B) SAN SALVADOR 0901

1. SOMETIME BETWEEN 0100 AND 0130 HOURS FEBRUARY 28, THE GOES NATIONAL POLICE MOVED INTO THE PLAZA LIBERTAD AND DISLODGED THE OPPOSITION UNO OCCUPIERS. THE POLICE ENTERED WITH SOME HALF DOZEN ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS, FIRE HOSES, TEARGAS, AND FIRE POWER.
2. A LARGE NUMBER OF THE CROWD, PERHAPS AS MANY AS 1000, SOUGHT REFUGE IN THE EL ROSARIO CHURCH WHICH ADJACENT TO THE PLAZA. THIS GROUP INCLUDED COL. CLARAMOUNT, MOST OF THE UNO LEADERSHIP FROM THE SQUARE, AND TWO AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS - KERNAN TURNER AND HAL MOORA, A WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER OUT OF ASSOCIATED PRESS BUREAU, MEXICO. TURNER WAS IN TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS UNTIL APPROXIMATELY 0315, WHEN LINE
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APPARENTLY CUT.

3. FIRST REPORT FROM TURNER WAS TO POLOFF AND INCLUDED REQUEST TO FACILITATE THEIR EXIT FROM SANCTUARY. TURNER SAID THERE WAS ONE SERIOUSLY INJURED PERSON INSIDE AND THAT RED CROSS WAS APPARENTLY UNABLE TO SECURE ENTRY OR GET WOUNDED OUT. TURNER'S ESTIMATE OF WOUNDED IN CHURCH WAS SIX-EIGHT. WHILE

POLOFF AND DATT WERE ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM ARMY CHIEF-OF-STAFF TO SECURE SAFE CONDUCT FOR AP'ERS, AMBASSADOR, ALSO NOTIFIED BY TURNER OF SITUATION, PLACED CALL TO PRESIDENT MOLINA. THE AMBASSADOR TOLD THE PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS PREDICAMENT AND THE REPORT OF WOUNDED. HE ASKED IF THE PRESIDENT, IN A SPIRIT OF HUMANITARIANISM, WOULD NOT PERMIT THE RED CROSS TO ENTER AND EVACUATE THE WOUNDED AND THE AMERICANS. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RED CROSS WERE IN PROGRESS TO EVACUATE ALL OCCUPANTS OF CHURCH.

4. THE RED CROSS GAINED ACCESS TO THOSE IN THE CHURCH, AND BEGINNING AT FIVE AM STARTED TO EVACUATE THOSE INSIDE. TURNER AND MOORE WERE AMONG THE LAST GROUP TO LEAVE. THEY ARE NOW IN THE EMBASSY, SAFE IF SHAKEN.

5. THE JOURNALISTS REPORT THAT THE POLICE ENTRY INTO THE PLAZA CAME WITHOUT WARNING, AND BEGAN WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPON FIRE. THE LINE OF FIRE SEEMED TO BE AT THE CROWDS FEET, SINCE MOST OF THE INJURIES WERE WOUNDS TO THE LOWER LEGS. THE FRONT ROW OF POLICE HAD THEIR MACHETES OUT WHEN THEY MOVED IN. WHEN THE RED CROSS FINALLY ENTERED THE CHURCH, ITS OFFICIALS BEGAN NEGOTIATIONS WITH COL CLARAMOUNT AND HIS MILITARY FOLLOWERS (COLS. MUNGIA AND CASTRO MORAN). CLARAMOUNT LEFT WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE RED CROSS FOR AN UNKNOWN DESTINATION. THE RED CROSS SAID IT COULD GUARANTEE SAFE PASSAGE TO ANY SITE IN THE CITY. SEVERAL OF THE UNO LEADERS BEGAN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASYLUM (ONE APPARENTLY WENT TO THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY).

CLARAMOUNT REPORTEDLY ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PROBABLY TO PERMIT PROSECUTION BY GOES UNDER MILITARY JUSTICE CODE. CONFIDENTIAL

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EVERYONE IN THE CHURCH HAD BEEN EVACUATED BY 0700. BOTH TURNER AND MOORE REPORT THAT THEY WERE TREATED WITH RESPECT DURING THE EVACUATION. THEY ALSO PRAISED CLARAMOUNT'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO KEEPING THINGS AS CALM AS POSSIBLE CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES. MOORE, THE PHOTOGRAPHER, HAD BEEN TOLD BY A RED CROSS OFFICIAL THAT THERE WAS A REWARD OFFER TO THE POLICEMAN WHO TOOK HIS FILM FROM HIM. HE NEVERTHELESS GOT OUT WITH HIS CAMERA, AND HOPES SOON TO HAVE HIS FILM WHICH HE LEFT WITH PRIEST AT CHURCH.

6 COMMENT: ALL INVOLVED, INCLUDING TURNER AND MOORE, ARE RELIEVED TO BE OUT OF THE CHURCH, SINCE AT THIS HOUR (0900 LOCAL) CROWDS WHICH HAVE AGAIN GATHERED IN THE VICINITY OF THE PLAZA ARE BEING FIRED UPON BY THE NATIONAL POLICE. LOZANO

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